

CLAIMS

1. An imaging system comprising:
a central processing unit;
a data storage unit in communication with said central processing unit;
an imaging device in electrical communication with said central processing unit;
and
a biometric authorization unit in electrical communication with said central processing unit, wherein a user inputs a biometric identifier into said biometric authorization unit in order to enable use of the imaging system.
2. The imaging system of claim 1, wherein biometric data extracted from the biometric identifier is compared with stored biometric data in said data storage unit, wherein the stored biometric data is associated with stored personal identification information, and wherein the stored biometric data and the stored personal identification information are stored after an initial registration.
3. The imaging system of claim 2, wherein user preference information is associated with the stored biometric data and with the personal identification information.

4. The imaging system of claim 2, wherein use of the imaging system is allowed when a match exists between the biometric data extracted from the biometric identifier and the stored biometric data.

5. The imaging system of claim 1, wherein information regarding the use of the imaging system by the user is stored in said data storage unit.

6. The imaging system of claim 1, wherein the imaging device is an ultrasound probe and the imaging system is an ultrasound imaging system.

7. The imaging system of claim 1, wherein the imaging system is a medical imaging system including one of a Computed Tomography (CT), X-ray, Positron Emission Tomography (PET), Single Photon Emission Computed Tomography (SPECT), Electron Beam Tomography (EBT), Magnetic Resonance (MR), and image-guided surgery system.

8. The imaging system of claim 1, wherein the biometric identifier is at least one of a fingerprint, handprint, voice, iris, retina, and facial thermogram.

9. The imaging system of claim 1, wherein the medical imaging system is networked into at least one other imaging system.

10. A medical imaging network comprising a plurality of medical imaging systems in communication with one another, each of said medical imaging systems comprising:

a medical imaging device; and

a biometric authorization unit, wherein a user inputs a biometric identifier into said biometric authorization unit in order to use the medical imaging device.

11. The medical imaging network of claim 10, further comprising a central management station in communication with each of said plurality of medical imaging systems.

12. The medical imaging network of claim 11, wherein biometric data extracted from the biometric identifier is stored in at least one of a central data storage unit in said central management station and individual data storage units in said plurality of imaging systems.

13. The medical imaging network of claim 11, wherein use information, including at least one of user identity, time, and length of an imaging session at each of said plurality of imaging systems is stored within at least one of said central management station and any of said plurality of imaging systems.

14. The medical imaging network of claim 11, wherein a user initially registers at one of said central management station and one of said plurality of imaging systems.

15. The medical imaging network of claim 12, wherein personal identification information and user preference information is associated with the stored biometric data.

16. The medical imaging network of claim 10, wherein at least one of said plurality of imaging devices is an ultrasound probe.

17. The medical imaging network of claim 10, wherein each of said plurality of imaging systems is one of a Computed Tomography (CT), X-ray, Positron Emission Tomography (PET), Single Photon Emission Computed Tomography (SPECT), Electron Beam Tomography (EBT), Magnetic Resonance (MR), and image-guided surgery system.

18. The medical imaging network of claim 10, wherein the biometric identifier is at least one of a fingerprint, handprint, voice, iris, retina, and facial thermogram.

19. A method of using a medical imaging system comprising:
registering to use the medical imaging system, said registering comprising:
 (i) inputting a biometric identifier into a biometric authorization unit;
 (ii) inputting personal information into the medical imaging system;
and
 (iii) associating biometric data extracted from the biometric identifier
with the personal information; and
 storing the biometric data and associated personal information;
 enabling use of the medical imaging system when biometric data input at the
biometric authorization unit matches stored biometric data.

20. The method of claim 19, further comprising storing individual imaging preferences for the medical imaging system as user preference information and associating the user preference information.

21. The method of claim 19, further comprising allowing said registering step by inputting a password.

22. The method of claim 19, wherein the medical imaging system is one of an ultrasound, Computed Tomography (CT), X-ray, Positron Emission Tomography (PET), Single Photon Emission Computed Tomography (SPECT), Electron Beam Tomography (EBT), Magnetic Resonance (MR), and image-guided surgery system.

23. The method of claim 19, wherein the biometric identifier is at least one of a fingerprint, handprint, voice, iris, retina, and facial thermogram.

24. A method of using audio/video equipment comprising:
registering to use the audio/video equipment by inputting biometric data;
storing the biometric data; and
enabling use of the audio/video equipment when biometric data input after said registering matches the stored biometric data.

25. The method of claim 24, further comprising restricting access to said registering step by requiring submission of a password.

26. The method of claim 24, wherein the audio/video equipment is a medical imaging system comprising one of an ultrasound, Computed Tomography (CT), X-ray, Positron Emission Tomography (PET), Single Photon Emission Computed Tomography (SPECT), Electron Beam Tomography (EBT), Magnetic Resonance (MR), and image-guided surgery system.

27. The method of claim 24, wherein the audio/video equipment is one of a television, camera, CD player, DVD player, and car stereo.